EVOLUTION OF THE HINDU TEMPLE AND OTHER ESSAYS

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Worship of the Tree. Ist cent. B. C. Mathura.

1. Evolution of the Hindu Temple

In the beginning in popular religion about 1000 B. C. the Hindu temple evolved from the remotest antiquity was just a platform open to sky with some kind of aniconic representation or symbol of the deity which could more accurately be named a 'shrine'. The symbol placed on the dais was worshipped. There were two kinds of worship : one through *mantra,* and the other a simple popular form of offering flowers, water, sweets, perfume and the lighting of a lamp. There were such shrines to the Earth Goddess Prithivi Devi or Mahimata, to the Yaksha, Naga and Vriksha Devatas, and to Siva and Vishnu. The earliest platforms (*than, chaura*) were dedicated to Yakshas. (See *Yaksha-sadam* in the *Rigveda 4.3.13*). However, the Yaksha shrines were preceded by Naga shrines or platforms : the platform- shrine was a very ancient tradition.

The second stage was reached when railings were provided round the platform, first of bamboo and wood, and later of stone. Earlier these were of moderate size, but later on in monumental form like the railings at Nagari and at Bharhut, Sanchi, Mathura, and round the great Stupas in the Andhra country.

At Nagari we have the full-fledged Vishnu platform with a high stone railing around it. This structure has a square platform and square railing. The railing consists of huge blocks of stone 8 or 9 feet in height similar to the English Stonehenge. In the three inscriptions of the second century B. C. in Brahmi script, it is named *Narayana Vataka* ("Enclosure of Narayana"). One can

see the transition from such a railing to the railings at Sanchi and other Stupas and temples. It is clear that the Buddhists adopted it from earlier traditions. They used the stone railing and the *bodhi manda*. The early Jaina teachers followed in the same footsteps of a central platform surrounded by a railing. This platform was covered with a slab of worship called *ayagapatta* ("Tablet of Homage"). On a brick platform was placed a stone tablet which was beautifully carved with one or more symbols and sometimes the figure of a Tirthankara in the middle. These two elements, platform and railing, were present in the Original Agni-platform (*vedi*), for there was the central platform (*vedi*) and an enclosing railing of timber or bamboo called the *vedika*.

A time was reached when the railing and the monumental gateways fell into disfavour. At first the gateways became unfashionable and then gradually also the railings probably because they involved huge expenditure.

The Brahmanical temple now came into the field retained the platform which now served as the high plinth of the temple and the pillars of the railing were assimilated into the full size of the high plinth. The temple or shrine was placed in the centre on this high terrace. The difference was that in the earlier Brahmanical shrine the platform was put on the same level as the railing but now it was placed on the top of the high plinth. This was an architectural problem which was solved without difficulty. The main problem was the evolution of the temple itself with its cella (*garbhagriha*) and tower (*sikhara*).

For this architectural evolution we have to look back a little. It was about the first century A. D. that the people were thinking about the great problems of the image and the temple. The transformation seems to have come in the time of the great Kushana emperors. The image had already appeared for the Yaksha and the Naga deities but these were installed on open air platforms and ceremonious worship was offered with water, flowers, lamp, music and sweets, etc. Gradually the problem of the Buddha image was seriously taken up and it was naturally decided to make colossal Bodhisattvas on the model of the huge Yaksha statues.

The immediate problem that followed was whether the big Bodhisattva statue should be erected in the open or should some other kind of enshrining be provided Here, we can have the following observation.

As the earliest colossal Bodhisattva images were very similar to the gigantic Yaksha images just placed on open platforms (for example, Parkham or Baroda Yaksha, both in Mathura district, Besnagar Yaksha etc.), the same architectural design, therefore, was to be used for enshrining them. We do not exactly know whether the same treatment was meted out to the earliest colossal Bodhisattva statues, but we do know from the available finds that some kind of parasol (*chhatra*) was placed on the top of a stone post to give shelter to the big-sized Bodhisattvas, as for example, the Bodhisattva in the Sarnath Museum, which was originally made at Mathura. It is apparent that this idea of providing a parasol both round and square was

developed in the Mathura school of art. We have found at Maholi a square parasol also.

After some time the round or square parasol was replaced by a chamber of moderate size improvised by three erect stone slabs on the three sides of the statue and kept on the top by a flat stone of modest size. The vertical slabs served as the walls and the flat stone as the ceiling of the narrow sanctum. The ceiling slab was carved with a big lotus flower to give it the appearance of a shrine. We have clear evidence of this in Mathura archaeological remains where we find the free standing Bodhisattva installed in a *gandhakuti* or "perfumed chamber". See also Bodhgaya inscriptions, Cunningham, *Mahabodhi*, pp. 58, 64, 66, where *gandhakuti* is used for a Buddhist temple, *brihad-gandhakutiprasada*, p. 58. It would be reasonable to name this as the earliest type of *garbhagriha*, that is, sanctum or cella. This model was accepted both by the Buddhists and the Hindus for we find that for about five to six hundred years the model of the *garbhagriha* was the early *gandhakuti* of quite small dimensions.

The third stage of evolution begins from about the fourth century in the early Gupta period when there was a parallel development of the Buddhist and Brahmanical shrines. The earliest example is found in the Gupta temple at Sanchi. Its characteristic features are : (1) there is a small square sanctum or *garbhagriha* in which the image was placed ; (2) there is a flat top and no *sikhara* ; (3) the walls of the sanctum are plain both on the inside and the outside as was in the case of the preceding *gandhakutis* ; (4) there

was provided a small *mandapa* or pavilion on pillars but open on the three sides most probably to provide some shelter to the worshippers; (5) a moderately high plinth was provided both for the *garbhagriha* and *mandapa*.

As was natural each one of these features underwent an evolution which may be seen in the temples built during the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh centuries, that is, mainly in the architectural complex of Gupta civilisation.

The next stage in the evolution of the Hindu temple began with the more elaborate development of the plinth (*jagati*), the sanctum (*garbhagriha*) and the tower (*sikhara*) accompanied with the elaboration of the image itself. This work began about the beginning of the Gupta period and continued right up to the medieval period, that is, from the fourth to the twelfth century when the grand monuments of the Hindu temples attained their fullest splendour.

So far as the high plinth was concerned it was given a number of mouldings. The first surviving example is at Deogarh where the plinth offers a transition between the railing and the moulding type. Here we find several bands of mouldings on the top and bottom of the vertical slabs depicted with the scenes from the incarnations of Vishnu. They are about two feet six inches in height or about the same size as the railing pillars at Mathura. Some of them were found *in situ* and quite a number were collected lying on the spot. The artists conceived of an upper smaller railing half the size of the pillars and thus bestowed on it a respectable height of about eight feet in all making

the whole thing appear quite attractive. The next stage is seen in high plinths of about the same size but organised with better sense of architectural mouldings combined with a triple basement of heavy stone blocks and surmounted by five courses (*panchathara*) of *gajathara, asvathara, vrishathara, narathara* and *hamasathara*. At times their number and order was subject to variation at the will of the sculptors. The number of mouldings was made still more elaborate by introducing the forms of *jadyakumbha* (pots full of water), *kalasa* (a pot of elongated shape), *kani* (conical moulding), *antarapatra* (a short vertical moulding to separate bigger mouldings), etc. This plinth was made of solid stone going all around a big platform and in a Hindu temple formed a very impressive architectural portion. The highest culmination of this was reached in the Chandela temples at Khajuraho. Earlier, a very appropriate example unique in its own way is afforded by the plinth of the Kailasa temple at Ellora which is twenty-five feet high and its broad base is occupied with scenes of a primeval forest in which elephants and lions are locked in trials of strength and the continuous frieze has also mouldings above and below, the whole representing a masterpiece of Indian architecture and sculpture in its fullest glory. The details and names of the mouldings are given in medieval *Silpa* texts.

The second element was the santum proper (*garbhagriha*) or the cella also called *mandovara* (a term meaning " on the plinth ", that is, *manda* plus *upari* from which *mandovara* is derived). The word *mandovara* usually denoted the cubicle portion of the temple

including the three side walls and the entrance side generally facing east. Its beginnings are seen at Sanchi in the earliest Gupta shrine and then gradually the three side walls were made more elaborate with carvings and sculptures and the entrance was also similarly provided with attendant sculptures, lintel and threshold. The side jambs of the doorway are at first single and then they are divided into two, three, four, five portions, up to nine. Each portion was given the name of *sakha*, each having a separate name after the motifs that occupied it : for example, the *pratihari-sakha*, the jamb bearing the figures of attendant deities, sometimes Ganga and Yamuna; *pramatha-sakha*, the band of dancing *gana* figures; *dampati-sakha*, the band of *mithuna* figures; *patralata-sakha*, the band of conventionalised foliated scrolls, etc. Such a doorway displayed the height of beauty of the Hindu temples of the Gupta period (*circa* 4th to 7th cent. A.D.) and one of its most charming examples is found in the Deogarh temple. These show the entrances of the temples as developed during Gupta times which formed the basis of greater elaboration in the medieval period.

The walls of the temple were at first quite plain; later on they began to be embellished with three niches on the exterior side, each having the image of a deity. Since the idea of trinity was evolved in Puranic Hinduism this was given concrete form in the body of the temple. Originally the walls were straight without any projections but soon they began to be beautified with three, five or seven and nine projections. The central one was called *ratha* (chariot) or *bhadra* (auspicious face); the others on the two sides of the centre

face were known as *pratiratha* (side-chariot) and *konakaratha* (corner chariot), or *pratibhadra* and *konakabhadra* which have the same general meaning. In course of time there was an evolution of the *sikhara* which was put on the cubical santum. The number of these projections was increased still more so that the santum assumed a circular form as in some of the South Indian temples.

The sanctum or the cubical portion was raised on the terrace of the plinth. It was divided into two portions, namely, a basement composed of several mouldings and then a hollow cubical portion. On the exterior side a number of elaborate mouldings were introduced on the outside of the walls. As time went on more and more of those mouldings were evolved as we find in the development of the medieval temples. The most conspicuous of them were the central niches on the three walls known as *rathikas* and the images in them as *rathika bimba*, i.e., the images placed in the *rathikas*. As we examine these other mouldings we come across a repetition of some of the mouldings on the plinth and several others which were new. In recent temples these are known as *panchabandha* or the five horizontal courses superimposed one above the other. The most conspicuous of them was the *naribandha* to accommodate the standing female figures in various dramatic poses or in amorous poses, *karanabandha* or *ratabandha* in Chandela temples at Khajuraho. The upper part of the cubicle portion of the sanctum was called its shoulder, *skandha*, surmounted by projecting eaves.

The last portion of the temple was the *sikhara* conceived of first in pyramidal form with three storeys or

tiers. This remained as the basic form of the *sikhara*, but in some of the great temples there was a gradual evolution into five or seven storeys as we find in the Lingaraja temple of Orisea and in the Khajuraho temples. One thing happened, especially, namely, an increase in the number of *sikharas* on the several *mandapas* as the *rangamandapa* (main *mandapa*), *nritya-mandapa* (song and dance hall) and *mukhamandapa* (porch). The one feature was that the height of *sikhara* on the main temple was double, that of *sikhara* on the second pavilion or the *rangamandapa* and this was indicated by a moulding in the centre of high tower where the figure of the lion was placed in a rampant position. In the South Indian temples the *sikhara* had its greatest elaboration known as *gopura* and having the basic architectural form of a vaulted roof with a dome on it. The *gopuram* was the name given to the four gateway entrances on the four sides of the main shrine and their place was in the surrounding wall but a tower on the main temple also took the form of a *gopuram* with a vaulted roof surmounted by a cupola of round dome topped by a heavy stone *amalaka* and *kalasa*. The evolution of the *sikhara* in the medieval period in the Eastern, Southern, Western and Central Indian temples followed its own conventions and their details are recorded in the *Silpa* texts. The last portion of the spire was the *amalaka* or ribbed flattened top surmounted by a *kalasa* topped by a finial (*stupi*) and a banner (*dhvaja*). The idea of a *stupi* and *dhvaja* was accepted both by the Brahmanas and Jainas for their respective temples.

The temple evolved as the complete form of a deity

conceived as a human being with his various bodily portions in a vertical form from the feet to the head including the crest. We especially know such parts as the feet (*pada*), shanks (*jangha*), legs, waist (*kati*), stomach (*madhya*), breast (*uras*), shoulder (*skandha*), head (*sikhara*) and crest (*sikha*). There are many views about the symbolism of the Hindu temple, but the one rooted in religious and mythological aspects is that it is the abode of the deity manifested in human form. The deity is the *pranic* symbol and the image is its concrete, material aspect. Therefore, in all ceremonies of consecration the last one is that of *prana-pratishtha* or the incarnation of *pranic* power in the material image. Then only it becomes a *deva* worthy of receiving worship.

2. The Site of the Temple

The site of a Hindu temple is a holy spot. It is the place where the Gods live. According to the Hindu conception the entire Mother-land (Matabhumi) is sacred and worthy of adoration, which is expressed in the Vedic phrase: *Namo matre prithivyai.* Even on this earth there are certain places marked as specially sacred. They are called Tirtha or Kshetra. The number is very large and distributed all over the country. They all are holy sites for the special worship of the Divine.

According to the *Brihatsamhita* the Gods love to reside in places where there are groves, rivers, mountains and springs, and in towns with pleasure-gardens (*Brihatsamhita 55/8*). Wherever there is natural beauty it is conducive to spiritual peace and contemplation. Bank of the rivers, lakes, sea shore, confluence of rivers, hill and mountain slopes, forests, groves and gardens, hermitages and other lovely spots in villages, towns, and cities, these are all Tirthas, and fit places for divine worship. In such places the Hindu temple is constructed. A temple is a Tirtha. Temples are built where there are Tirthas. The presence of water is essential as far as possible being made available either by nature or by artifice.

A Hindu temple is a representation in form of the cosmic Purusha. Whether the temple is a small chaple or a vertual city with many buildings of great extent and of complex designs, it conforms to the one central principle,

namely, that manifests to the eye and mind of the devotee the body and substance of God who dewells in it. God is transcendent and therefore invisible and unmanifest. In the temple the cosmic Purusha becomes the Form according to the Hindu philosophy and religious belief. The universal essence is Purusha. Purusha is the principle of all things. The Prime Person whence all originate, that Purusha incarnates in the Vastu Purusha, that is, the presiding deity of the Vastu or the site of the temple.

The temple building is erected on the site or Vastu. The plan of this site is called Vastu-Purusha-Mandala. This plan is a ritual diagram divided in 64 or 81 sqrs. It can not be said either to be the ground plan of the temple or the plan of the site but it regulates both of them. It may cover the whole site or the sacred area marked for the temple or it may be equal to the area actually occupied by the main temple building (Prasada) only, or it may be ritually drawn on a Vedi. It is drawn on the ground before the building of the temple starts and on it the temple stands. In principle this Mandala is always square and at the out set serves the purpose of an architectural site which is known as the Vastu-Purusha-Puja. The knowledge of this Mandala is pre-requisite to erect the building. The square plot is divided into two compartments, each called a *pada* and the diagonals are drawn. The name of this square is Vastu Purusha Mandala or Vastu-Chakra. The temple stands on it. Its deity is called Vastu-Purusha or Vastu Devata or Vastu Brahma. The worship of the Vastu deity is called Vastu Puja or Vastukarma. The Vastu deity is conceived according

to the pattern of the human body—"*nara prastaramiti tadvastu prastaramityapi*". There are two kinds of Vastu known as Sthira Vastu and Chara Vastu. The latter is worshipped in the case of temporary installation on the occasion of the festivals.

The Yajamana is the patron who finances the building of the temple. On his behalf the temple is built by the architect who is called the *sthapati*. The architect should have knowledge of the Science of Architecture (Vastusastra) and of the other sciences like Mathematics, Astronomy and of the other various arts and crafts. The perfect architect should possess immediate intuition, a readiness of judgement (Prajna) in contingencies and the ability to integrate his knowledge. Having built the temple the architect himself is struck with wonder and exclaims : Oh ! how was it that I built it.

The architect is the foremost of the craftsmen or Silpins. He is called also Visvakarman. His other assistants are Sutragrahin, Sutradhara, Takshaka and Vardhaki, *i. e.*, the surveyer, sculptor, builder and plasterer - painter, over and above these four there is the architect priest called Sthapaka who has the qualification of Acharya or Guru. He is generally a Brahmin. He who wishes to build a temple should first of all select a Sthapaka well-versed in the Silpasastra and a Sthapaka who also possesses practical Silpa knowledge.

Once the site is selected for building the temple, they take the possession of the site for that divinity whose presence will be invoked and beheld in the temple. The

Earth Goddess is invoked to stand firm (*dridha*). She is permanent, firm and study. She is finally settled in her station by the immutable cosmic law, the Supreme Principal. When the proper puja have been performed and the place is taken to belong to the divinity whose temple will be built finally, the ground is levelled and the plan and forecast of the temple is laid out.

The temple is the symbol of Righteousness of law and cosmic order, Dharma. Those who built the temple accept the supremacy of law or Dharma in their lives and society. They believe that order should be established in this wild unrully and errant world. The temple in this respect was a perfect substitute of the Vedic Yajna which also symbolised the cosmic order and was synonymous of Rita.

The temple diagram is laid out on the firm and level ground. The ground should be made a perfect square. In practice the actual size of the square need not necessarily be co-extensive with the site nor even with the building of the temple. It may however be equal to any one of these or else of a definite size.

The Vastu is the planned site of the building. Purusha is the cosmic supreme Creator who manifests himself in the temple. The temple is like his body, the abode of his image. Mandala denotes any closed polygan. Its essential form is square, but it can be converted into a triangle, hexagon, octagon and circle of equal area. The square is the essential and the perfect form of Indian architecture. It pre-supposes the circle and results from it.

The *Brihatsamhita* speaks of two types of diagrams,

one consisting of sixtyfour equal squares (padas), and the other of eightyone squares. The diagram of sixtyfour squares is for the construction of shrines and the Vastu of eightyone squares is for the construction of houses and other buildings.

Substance of which the temple is built. A large number of stone built temples are preserved and only a few of bricks. Stones are quarried in the various parts of India. Sand-stone is used in the North Indian temples ; red sand-stone in the Western parts round about Mathura, and buff-coloured Chunar sand-stone in the Eastern portions. Marble and lime-stone are used in Rajasthan and Western India ; trap in the Deccan ; a fine grained black-chlorite schist in the later Chalukyan temples of the Canarees district; granite (Hindi, Kurta) in South India , laterite (a rock of red colour) and sand-stone in Orissa, black basalt (Hindi, Telia patthar) in the Rajmahal hills. The earliest stone temples are preserved from about A.D. 400. In the Gupta period brick was also commonly used for buildings. The earliest preserved brick temple is at Bhitargaon in Kanpur district of about 5th century. In the Uttaresvara and Kalesvara temple at Tagara or Ter in Hyderabad doors, beams and ceilings are of wood of about 7th century. The Lakshmana temple in Sirpur (District Raipur, M. P.) of 7th century also has the door-frames of wood. Brick and wood, single or combined, were also frequently used but being perishable have mostly disappeared. Wooden temples are even now preserved and in worship in Malabar and the Himalayan districts. The earliest preserved stone temples dating from about 400 A.D. are found in Central

India. Their walls are unadorned consisting of a few courses of relatively large stones dressed on all levels and joined without morter. Their roof of stone is flat. From *circa* 6th century onwards, the time of the earliest preserved treatises on architecture, stone is described as one of the accepted materials. The Mora well-inscription from Mathura of Mahakshatrapa Shodasa of the Ist century B. C. speaks of a temple, a Saila Devagriha, a stone-house of God, where five stone images of the holy Pancha Viras of the Vrishnis were installed. Of subsequent stone temples mentioned in insctiptions, the one on the Eran stone Boar speaks of the Saila Prasada, the stone temple of Toramana which seems to have had a Vishnu image. The Gwalior stone inscription of Mihiragula refers to a stone temple of Surya as Sailamaya Prasada. In the foundation or *adhara* of the temple the Brahma-sila or Brahma-slab is deposited. A treasure jar (Nidhi-kalasa), made of stone or copper is placed on Adhara-sila and on the jar a lotus is placed. In the jar is invoked Bhuvanesvari as greatest Sakti, holder of the *Asana* the seat or foundation of the temple.

Stone when quarried and cut is an enduring and noble material fit for gods, priest and ruling classes. It is hundred times more meritorious to build a brick temple than a thatched temple ; ten thousand times more meritorious to build stone than a brick temple.

Stone, in its natural site the living rock is also made to hold sanctuaries and to stimulate stupendous temples such as the Kailasanatha temple at Ellora of the 8th century and the smaller rock cut shrines of different types at Mamallapuram in the 7th century.

3. Indian Sculpture and Painting

STONE SCULTURE

Sculpture may truly be regarded as the characteristic national art of the country in which the genius of the people found its concrete, lasting and full expression. Stone sculpture in India took the form of images in the round or carved slabs. The images either stood in the open as in the case of colossal statues like the Yaksha-figure, from Parkham, which was an early feature, or later on enshrined in temples and chaityas. The cave-shrines as well as the free-built temples possess abundant sculpture of great variety and beauty, often marked by monumental quality.

Material

Indian sculpture bears its distinguishing stamp in the stone, generally quarried locally, of which it is made. In the Harappa culture the statuary, very limited in number, is made of limestone or steatite obtained from the mountain-quarries in Sind. The Mauryan sculpture of the time of Asoka (third century B.C.) is made of buff-coloured sandstone from Chunar in Mirzapur District, capable of taking a mirror-like polish on the surface, of which the secret was lost after about 200 B. C. The sculpture on the railings of the great Stupas at Sanchi and Bharhut (second-first century B. C.) is distinguished by its darkish red sandstone obtained locally in Central India. The sculptors of the Mathura school made use of spotted red

sandstone obtained from the quarries at Tanpur and Bayana in Bharatpur. In the Kushana period (first-third centuries), the stone was comparatively soft and the specks in stone were of grey colour. During the Gupta period the deeper layers of the rock were tapped and the stone generally employed was of hard grain with minute black spots. The sculpture in Gandhara had a distinctive stone of blue slate and schist—a kind of foliated rock abundant in the Swat valley. North Indian sculpture from about the seventh century onwards shows whitish sandstone. The sculpture in Bihar and Bengal belonging to the Pala school (eighth century onwards) is in basalt of black colour. The sculpture from the Deccan is again generally of basalt.

Chronology

The earliest sculpture is obtained from the urban culture of the Indus valley datable to the third millennium B. C. This is followed by a gap of about 2000 years during which the intellectual contents of Hinduism, as embodied in the Vedas and the epic literature, and of Buddhism, as found in the Pali literature, were perfected, but they are not backed by any sculptural forms. The empire of Magadha founded by Chandragupta about 322 B. C. is the period of the earliest historical stone sculpture in India. The Yaksha figures from Parkham (Mathura District) and Patna and the monolithic pillars with animal-capitals belong to the Maurya period (c. 322-185 B. C.). The next phase is that of the monumental gateways and decorated railings of Bharhut and Sanchi raised in the time of the Sungas and their successors (second-first

century B.C.). The rise of the Gandhara school of sculpture synchronizes with the age of the Kushana emperors (first and second centuries). This was also the golden age of the indigenous school of sculpture at Mathura and is marked by the appearance of the Buddha image. The great sculptured Stupas at Amaravati and Nagarjunikonda dated from 150-300 and were made of marble. The age of the imperial Guptas (fourth-fifth centuries) was the Golden Age of Indian history, in which Mathura, Sarnath, Deogarh, Udaigiri, Bhumara, Bhitargaon and Ajanta, etc., were flourishing centres of sculpture and art.

The sculpture of the early medieval period had four main centres, namely, (1) the Chalukya monuments of Badami and Aihole (550-642); (2) the rock-cut shrines and sculptures at Mahabalipuram executed under the patronage of the Pallavas of Kanchi (600-700); (3) the rock-cut cave temples of Siva at Ellora and Elephanta founded during the time of the Rashtrakutas (eighth-ninth centuries); and (4) the Mahayana Buddhist sculpture of Bihar and Bengal of the time of Pala kings (*c.* 750-1100). In the late medieval period (ninth-twelfth centuries) the structural temple had attained its greatest development and whatever complexity of architectural design and mystic symbolism had gone into its making, from the point of view of sculpture the age was remarkable for its carved slabs in high relief, ornate decoration and bold execution. Sculpture then had almost lost its independent character and had become subservient to temple-architecture. The great temples at Khajuraho in Bundelkhand are monuments of Chandella art (*c.* 1100),

and their sculpture, though overloaded, represents great vigour and mastery in the rendering of difficult poses. The temples at Bhuvanesvar (c. 1100), and the Sun-temple at Konarak (thirteenth century) show extreme profusion of sculptured forms, both human and animal, enriched with endless patterns of decoration. The Jaina temples at Mount Abu and Girnar and Satrunjaya (both in Gujrat) built under the Solanki kings (tenth-twelfth centuries) display an efforescence of sculptured forms integrated to the purpose of architecture and achieved by the single-minded devotion of the sculptors revelling in deep-cut work.

In South India Tanjore was a great centre of temple construction, where under the benevolent rule of the Cholas, the great Rajaraja (985-1018) and his son Rajendra (1018-1035), the temple-architecture reached its zenith and sculpture similarly bold and majestic came into existence in the form of temple-figures. The craze for colossal is best seen in the Jaina statue of Gommatesvara at Sravana-Belgola in Mysore, cut out of solid rock in 983. 57 feet in height, it is one of the largest free-standing images in the world. The temples at Belura and Halebid, built under the patronage of Vishnuvardhana, the first Hoysala king (1111-1131), are richly embellished with images of Brahmanical gods and goddesses and done in an ornate style, which partakes of metal-like carving. This was the last glow of the lamp of Indian sculpture. From c. 1300 onwards Indian sculpture lost its vitality and degenerated into mere craftsmanship catering to routine requirements.

Contents of the art

The contents of Indian sculpture, although most varied revolve mainly round three things : (1) the story of Buddhism ; (2) Brahmanical pantheon with images and legendary scenes of gods and goddesses ; and (3) decorative figures, motifs and designs. The life of the Buddha as a subject in plastic art occupied an important place in early Indian sculpture. From the point of religious history, it may be said that nothing else illustrates so well the extent of popularity and the depth of devotion enjoyed by Buddhism amongst the masses as do the monuments of Buddhist art, mainly in North India and Deccan. The earliest Buddhist art begins with the reign of the Mauryan emperor Asoka and the monumental columns and capitals that survive from his age are distinctive both in style and contents in the history of Indian art. This was followed in the second century B.C. by an age of great Stupas adorned with gateways and railings of magnificent effect, e g. those at Bharhut and Sanchi in Central India. The railing at Bharhut was pulled down and has been re-erected in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. The subject of representation relate mainly to events in Buddha's life in his latest birth and to the Jataka stories of his previous lives as recorded in the Pali collection. But a special feature of this art consists in the importance given to the folk-cults of *yakshas* and *yakshis*, tutelary local deities of forest and village-life, and that of worship of trees (*vriksha-devatas*) and serpents (*nagas* and *nagis*). The inspiration of these folk-cuts was rooted in the soil. It is a joyous and

spontaneous homage through the forms of art to the deities that had a luxuriant growth in the folk-mind. The art, although primitive, is direct and effective in its statement. These reliefs represent a philosophy older than the Great Enlightenment and there is no evident connexion with the philosophical doctrine of Buddhism. The artists look upon the Buddha as a perfect being, whose influence permeates the atmosphere, but whose human presence is only expressed by a symbol. Although it may seem paradoxical, the Buddha is never represented in human form in early Buddhist art at Bharhut, Sanchi and Bodh-gaya. The image of the Buddha makes its first appearance about the beginning of the Christian era, and archæological evidence firmly shows that in the third year of Kanishka the indigenous sculptors of Mathura had arrived a formula of Buddha image derived from older plastic forms like the Parkham Yaksha. The new image seems to have satisfied the religious needs of the age to a remarkable degree, so that within a hundred years of its formulation it had altogether ousted the earlier practice of representing the Master through symbols like the foot-print (*paduka*), *bodhi*-tree, *bodhimanda*, *dharmachakra*, stupa, etc. The emergence of the image, in itself a result of the new changes that had crept into the religious outlook of Buddhism due to the influence of the Bhakti (devotional) school of philosophy, must have exercised profound influence both on the art of sculpture as applied to images and on the religious approach of the masses towards Buddhism. The image becomes henceforth the main element of sculpture and worship. The impulse to worship the Buddha in image-form

became stronger and the practical ethical eight-fold path of early Buddhism yielded in attraction to the worship of the Buddha in the visible sign of the image. The Buddhist images are, first, those of Buddha dressed as a royal prince with turban and costly ornaments prior to the attainment of enlightenment, designated as Bodhisttva; and secondly those portraying the Master after his enlightenment. In this latter form he is dressed like a monk. As convention ruled it, a great man must show some bodily signs (*mahapurusha-lakshana*) and so the Buddha image shows some of them, for example, the protuberance on the skull (*ushnisha*), the hair-dot between the eye-brows (*urna*), elongated ears (*lamba-karnapasa*), webbed figures (*jalanguli*) and the *chakra*-symbol on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. The images are either standing or seated, the first ones being conceived as colossal in size. Of ths details of Buddha's life the four great events, namely, biւth (*jati*) at Lumbini, enlightenment (*sambodhi*) at Bodhgaya, first sermon or the 'turning of the wheel of law' (*dharmachakra-pravartana*) at Sarnath and death (*parinirvana*) at Kusinara, are subject of frequent representation in the early Buddhist art.

Stupa-worship was an ancient form of honouring the great dead and Buddhism seems to have borrowed it from folk-religion. But it played a considerable part in the evolution of Buddhist architecture and sculpture, specially in the form of the enclosing gateways and railings. The Buddhist pantheon as evidenced in sculpture is limited to the image of the Buddha and the

representation of his life-scenes and the Jataka stories, as seen specially in the art of the Sunga and Kushana periods. With the passage of time, however, it tended to become elaborate and at Sarnath we see signs of this growing complexity in the forms of several Bodhisattvas like Maitreya and Avalokitesvara and the Dhyani Buddhas. In the Pala art of Bihar and Bengal the Buddhist pantheon attains its maximum elaboration, and sculpture and degenerates into iconographical pastime.

The place of Jainism in early Indian sculpture is practically confined to the material from Mathura in the form of sculptured slabs, railing-pillars, gateways and images of Tirthankaras which are mostly inscribed and throw light on the history of the Jaina religious church in the early centuries of the Christian era. Except for images the other motifs of sculpture and architectnre are the same as those in early Buddhist art. Later on, with the growth of the Brahmanical structural temple, Jaina art spread in central and western India, and both in architectural patterns and the elements of decoration, the art of temple-building, although harnessed to the needs of Jainism and Brahmanism, remained an undivided Indian art. The rich Jaina devotees from the ninth century onwards were great builders to whose munificence we owe the famous Dilwara temples of Mount Abu bult by Vimla Shah and Tejapala respectively (c. 1032 and 1232); and the great temple-cities built not for human but for divine habitation picturesquely on the hills of Girnar and Saturnjaya-Palitana in Gujrat. In the Dil-

wara temples, the white marble sculpture is of the most delicate kind. As Cousens remarks : 'The amount of beautiful ornamental detail spread over these temples in the minutely carved decoration of ceilings, pillars, doorways, panels, and niches is simply marvellous ; the crisp, thin, translucent, shell-like treatment of the marble surpasses anything seen elsewhere, and some of the designs are of veritable beauty. The work is so delicate that ordinary chiselling would have been disastrous. It is said that much of it was produced by scrapping the marble away, and that the mosons were paid by the amount of marble dust so removed'. The figure-sculpture, deeply under-cut, is in harmony with the rest of the architecture of the temple and looks beautiful in spite of the exuberance of detailed ornamentation.

The family of Brahmanical gods and goddesses, although fromidable in size, can be conveniently grouped round the personality of the three major deities, namely, Brahma, the Creator ; Vishnu, the Preserver ; and Siva, the Destroyer. They are represented singly or attended by their consorts, Sarasvati, Lakshmi and Parvati. Each is attended by a number of celestial beings, and in sculpture much attention has been paid to the life-exploits of each deity in various incarnations showing his victory over a number of demons. Elaborate accounts of these divine deeds, technically known as *lila*, are given at length in the epics and the Puranas, and the sculptured contents of such great temples as the Kailasa temple at Ellora offer a visual commentary to the Puranic documentation. The

theon, although posed on the simple core of the trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva—tended to become more and more elaborate with the admission of many subsidiary gods and goddesses and ultimately the element of true sculpture petered out into iconographic formulæ. Some of the greatest and finest Indian sculpture is no doubt preserved in the Brahmanical temples as indicated above.

Survey of different schools

Among the noteworthy specimens of the Indus Valley sculpture may be mentioned a fine bearded male figure wearing a shawl with three-petalled ornamentation from Mohenjo-daro and two small nude torsos of male figures from Harappa. The former shows skilful portraiture, whereas the Harappa torsos with their remarkable modelling and naturalistic pose would rank with the first-rate pieces of Greek sculpture.

Tall and polished monolithic pillars surmounted by animal-capitals, raised by Asoka in the third century B.C., are monuments of great beauty. The most remarkable of them all is the large lion-capital found at Sarnath, which once surmounted a column bearing an imperial edict against creating schism in the Buddhist church. The capital consists of four figures of stately lions seated back to back and facing the four directions. The round abacus is decorated with four *dharmachakras* each with twentyfour spokes and four animals—an elephant, a bull, a horse and a lion. The base consists of a lotus with inverted petals. On the head on the lions was once supported a stone wheel or *dharmachakra* of thirtytwo spokes, a few fragments of which have

been found. Apparently the symbolism was intended to represent the victory of the 'wheel of the law' over physical force. The lion-capital constitutes a triumph of Indian sculpture for its vigorous representation, monumental quality and symbolic character. The bull-capital of Rampurwa (District Champaran, Bihar), consisting of a sturdy well-built bull-figure delicately poised above a round abacus with honeysuckle and palmette decoration and a base of inverted lotus-design is another masterpiece of Asokan sculpture.

The stone railing and gateways of Bharhut Stupa date from about 150 B.C. and contain vivid figures in relief of *yakshas* and *yakshis*, *nagas* and *devatas* and Jataka-stories and scenes from Buddha's life conceived in an atmosphere of natural freedom. The wealth of floral and animal-designs is also infinite. As Fergusson remarks: 'Some animals, such as elephants, deer and monkeys, are better represented there than in any sculpture known in any part of the world, so too are some trees'. The great Stupa of Sanchi, a massive hemisphere veneered with plain stone slabs, is surrounded by a high stone railing (*vedika*) and four monumental gateways (*toranas*), the latter entirely covered with sculpture. The sculptures are crowded with figures and, in spite of their primitive treatment, convey an extraordinary sense of decorative design. The whole approach of early Indain art is realistic. Its main interest is neither spiritual nor ethical, but altogether directed to human life ; luxury and pleasure are represented as practical facts, endorsed by the inherently sensuous qualities of the plastic language.

The art of the Andhras is exemplified in the cave-shrines of Karle, Bhaja, Kanheri, etc., in Maharashtra round Bombay and in the valley of Krishna towards the east. The sculpture in the Karle and Kanheri caves showing robust-bodied male and female figures at the entrance of the excavated chaitya-halls vividly illustrates the sensuous quality of early Indian plastic art. The Stupas of Amaravati and Nagarjunikonda on the bank of the Krishna (150-300) were remarkable monuments, furnished with numerous bas-reliefs crowded with figures showing great movement, freedom and grouping skill.

The centre of art was now shifting to North India. Two schools of sculpture distinguished alike by remarkable creative activity came into existence at Mathura and Taxila during the reign of the Kushana emperors Kanishka, Huvishka and Vasudeva (first-second centuries). The school of Mathura shows great originality, richness and beauty in its sculpture, characterized by free-standing images, carved slabs and portrait-figures of emperors and noblemen. In its architectural patterns this art continues the tradition of the old railings and gateways decorated with sculpture in relief. Some of the most perfect specimens of female beauty ever carved in Indian sculpture are found on the railing-pillars of Mathura showing women enjoying scenes of toilet, dance and music and pastimes with birds and garden-sports under *asoka* and *kadamba* trees. The noteworthy contribution of the Mathura school, however, which introduced a revolution in Indian plastic art, centred round the Buddha image. The image was

fashioned in accordance with the traditions of the Yoga and Bhakti schools by putting together the elements of figural representation already known to the early masters of the Parkham Yaksha type. Besides Buddha the Jaina Tirthankaras and Brahmanical gods and goddesses also began to be carved in typical yogic postures. The priority of the Buddha image is a matter of dispute between the schools of Gandhara and Mathura but the admitted fact is that the Mathura Buddha bears independent features derived from the preceding colossal statues like the Parkham Yaksha. The only point of contact with the Gandhara school was in the case of the seated Buddha figures wrapped in a folded robe with a rather meek and insipid form. The Mathura school, although developed from the early sculpture of Central India, freely borrowed motifs from the flourishing Gandhara school of the North-west ; this is evident in the Bacchanalian groups with corpulent Silenus as one of the figures, and such Hellenistic subjects as Hercules fighting the Nemean lion. But the borrowed elements of form and decoration are only a small part of the repertoire of Mathura sculptors whose true genius is seen in the treatment of Indian motifs and subjects.

The Graeco-Buddhist art of Gandhara is a product of the combination of foreign and Indian elements. Although in their first enthusiasm foreign experts over-rated its artistic value, the Gandhara school was nevertheless both extensive and vital, consisting of an earlier phase (first-third centuries) in which the stone images of Buddha and Bodhisattvas, carved slabs of

scenes from Buddha's life and Jatakas predominated, and a later phase (fourth-fifth centuries) confined to plastic art in stucco. The stucco art represents figures and heads of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, secular types of men and women, demons and divine figures etc.; once richly coloured, they are of great artistic value and show a genuine aesthetic fervour.

Indian plastic art reaches its greatest refinement in the Gupta period. The figures are more slender, the poses more gracefully executed and the elements of drapery and ornamentation more restrained than in Kushana art. The difference between the products of the two schools becomes evident by looking closely at the Buddha images of the two periods. The Kushana halo is plain with scalloped margin ; the Gupta halo is more elaborate and covered with lotus-design and concentric bands of decoration amongst which beaded border usually is one. The Kushana image has a simple background of seated figures : the Gupta one has a high-backed throne supported by a horizontal architrave and praneing bracket-figures (*vyala-torana*). The Kushana image shows the muscular body, shaven hair, *bodhi*-tree carved on the back-slab, drapery partly plain and partly folded covering the left shoulder with a *Sanghati* that shows engraved folds and plain border; the Gupta image on the other hand shows elegance of form, head covered with short curls, absence of the *bodhi*-tree and drapery entirely consisting of stylized folds shown in relief and with a frilled edge. In the seated Kushana image there are two flywhisk-bearing attendants which are absent in the Gupta images: similar is the case with the *urna* mark between the eyebrows

usually present in the former and absent in the latter. The fully-open round eyes of the Kushana images are replaced by elongated half-open eyes, and the equal division of the upper and lower eye-lids in the Kushana figures is replaced by eye-lids becoming broader with the gaze fixed at the tip of nose. The spiritual quality of Gupta sculpture is its most patent feature which is so clear in the Buddha images from Sarnath and Mathura.

But much more original were the developments of Brahmanical sculpture which witnessed an unusual expansion of the pantheon, the growth of the structural temple and a new emphasis placed on the image. This is seen in the examples found at Deogarh in the Dasavatara temple and at Udaigiri in the colossal image of Adivaraha temple and at Bhumara in the Siva temple. The deep-cut foliated scroll (*patralata*) and figures of gnomes and couples (*dampatis*) become a regular feature of Gupta decorative motifs.

The groups of temples at Badami and Aihole executed under the early Chalukyas (sixth-seventh centuries) show some very remarkable sculpture with a greater tendency towards free movement than that of North India. The Pallava sculpture of the Far South carries the tradition of vigorous movement still further. It is represented at its best at Mahabalipuram on the sea-coast accompanied by a wealth of magnificent reliefs in the rock-cut shrines. For example, the Mahisha-mandapam group of Durga, Krishna lifting the mountain Govardhana, the milking of cows in the Krishna cave-shrine and the open-air rock-cut sculpture repre-

senting the scene of the decent of the Ganga (*Ganga-vatarana*) are some of the most vivid sculptured reliefs done in this country. In the words of Coomaraswamy, 'Seventh century Pallava sculpture is of a very high order ; it differs chiefly from that of the Gupta period in the greater slenderness and freer movement of the forms, a more oval face and higher cheek bones. The divine and human figures are infinitely gracious and in the representation of animals this school excels all others'.

The Rashtrakutas were the cultural successors of the Chalukyas in the Deccan and in the eighth century kept the torch burning in the domains of art and literature. The Kailasa temple at Ellora cut out of live rock in the time of Krishna II (757-787) contains some very bold sculpture. The figures are tall, powerfully built, reflecting and informed with spiritual and physical poise. The scene of Ravana shaking Mount Kailasa with Siva and Parvati seated above is not only magnificent but shows great energy. The cave-shrine of Elephanta is a prototype of that at Ellora, which contains the deservedly famous Mahesamurti (popularly known as Trimurti). Such works and buildings cut into the solid rock created a sort of heavenly retreat, a divine world, where men could associate for a while with the greatness and glory of their gods. The subject-matter of early medieval sculpture is rooted in the Puranic stories of the lives of gods and goddesses.

In the late medieval period (tenth-thirteenth cen-

turies) Indian sculpture entered upon a new phase of activity. Its main centres were at Khajuraho in the north, Mount Abu, Girnar and Palitana in the west, Halebid in the south and Bhuvanesvar and Konark in the east. The structural temples were enriched with sculptured forms in high relief with an exuberance of detail which in itself accounts for beauty. It will be found that the later medieval sculpture is overladen with a multiplicity of iconographic forms. Another feature which has attracted frequent notice is the presence in the temples at Khajuraho and Konark of a series of erotic posture-figures (*ratabandhas*) influenced by the prevailing religious conception of Tantra-worship. The traditions of the marble sculpture of Gujrat continued also in Rajputana as is seen in the beautiful Sarasvati image from Bikaner.

In South India, Indian sculpture attained a new maturity during the Chola period (tenth-eleventh centuries). The Hoysala art of Mysore (twelfth-thirteenth century) is executed in a fine-grained dark schist which lends itself to unlimited elaboration of detailed carving, more appropriate to metal than stone. The stream of Indian sculpture dries up during the Muslim period but only after transmitting its tradition as it were to extensive and vital schools of pictorial art. The feeling for volume and vivid representation were qualities about which Indian sculptors cared more than either anatomical truth or perspective. The Indians took a keen interest in their sculptures and temples and enjoyed their plastic creations at leisure almost as a perpetual routine of life.

TERRACOTTAS

Figurines of burnt clay or terracotta have been regarded with special favour in Indian plastic art. They have a long history behind them and the material comes from historic and protohistoric sites. The clay specimens from the Harappa culture far outnumber all other forms of its statuary. They are hand-made and the modelling, although effective, is crude, specially in the case of human figurines which are less successful than the figurines of birds and animals. The female figurines represent a type of mother-goddess with prominent breasts and broad hips, adorned profusely with appliqué ornaments.

The plastic tradition in clay, as yet unsupported by material evidence for the next two thousand years, becomes abundant again from the Mauryan period, and numerous specimens have been unearthed in the excavations of historical sites in North India from Taxila to Pataliputra. Technically the earliest specimens show archaic features and are modelled by hand. Amongst them the female figurines seem to represent the mother-goddess type and those from Mathura in grey colour show links with older traditions. In the Sunga period about the second century B.C., the mould makes its appearance. A period of transition is witnessed by the use of moulds for pressing out the head and joining it to a bust modelled by hand, the figures being still in the round. With the discovery of the mould the coroplasts made rapid progress with this art, and not only did its use become exclusive but objects of true art began to be produced. The early figurines

from about first century B. C. from Mathura, Ahichchhatra, Kosam, Patna, etc., are made completely by mould and consequently are in the nature of flat plaques. Another far-reaching revolution took place in the sphere of subject-matter, for religious figurines were being gradually replaced by secular ones. Single figures of men and women and of couples (*dampati*) engaged in toilet, music or dance, formed topics of representation in Sunga terracotta art. Special mention should be made of the numerous female plaques of great beauty found at Kosam near Allahabad, including a limited group of erotic ones. The female figure from that place, representing probably the goddess of beauty, Sri, now deposited at the Indian Institute at Oxford, is one of the most charming figures equally in facial features and its ornamentation. Another prolific school during the Sunga period, of which exquisite figurines of laughing boy and girl are typical instances, flourished at Pataliputra.

During the Kushana period terracotta art seems to have received a setback. The available specimens from the datable layers at Ahichchhatra are of crude workmanship showing a neglect in the use of mould and reversal to hand-made form. But with the advent of the Gupta age new possibilities opened out for terracotta art, and it was soon found to be most convenient and handy medium to convey the message of art to the rich and the poor. The clay-modeller's art was soon established on a footing of equality with sculpture, and big structural brick temples decorated with ornamental friezes of terracotta plaques and

large-size figures became the order of the day. Even the architectural elements of the buildings were conceived in terms of terracottas, as is witnessed in the use of moulded bricks in the surviving brick temples of Bhitargaon, District Kanpur and the Lakshmana temple of Sirpur, District Raipur. They are of all sizes, from about 6 to 18 inches in length, and the variety of patterns is infinite, some of them being very effective, specially the diaper, the fretwork and the floral ones. The Gupta terracottas consist mostly of plaques pressed out of moulds with shallow relief, but large panels for temple and domestic buildings with deep relief are also found, as the plaques and figures of Siva and Parvati from Ahichchhatra.

The Gupta tradition of the clay-modeller's art survived into the early and late medieval periods, both in India and Greater India. The brick temples of Paharpur and Mahasthan and at other places in Bengal show the continued tradition of terracotta art up to the eighteenth century. As objects of social history Indian clay figurines acquaint us with many a domestic subject and present an inventory of social types.

Bronzes

Indian bronzes and metallic images are cast by the *cire perdue* or 'lost-wax' process, so called from the fact that the wax-model which serves as the core of operation is lost or drained out before actual casting takes place. The subject first modelled in wax is coated with clay. Next the wax is melted out leaving behind a mould into which liquid metal is poured to

cast a solid image. In Nepal, however, hollow images were in vogue : the subject was first modelled in clay and this core was coated with wax and the wax in turn was covered with a coat of clay. After draining the wax out by heating, the mould was used for casting.

The earliest Indian bronzes cast by this process come from the Harappa culture. The most interesting of them is the figure of a dancing girl with slender and elongated arms and legs, wearing profuse bangles. The figure, although primitive, is still very effective. Much later in time are the Kushana bronzes available from Taxila, but they are not very impressive. During the Gupta period the casting of almost life-size metal images was practised with consummate skill as is evident in the copper Buddha image from Sultanganj (District Bhagalpur), at present in the Birmingham Museum. The Brahma in the Karachi Museum is also a remarkable specimen both for its plastic form and facial expression. The Gupta bronzes exhibit the characteristic feature of graceful poses, wet drapery and sparse ornamentation seen in the art of stone sculpture. From about the eighth century the vogue of metal images in portable size increased. The bronzes from Kurkihar (District Gaya) and Nalanda of the Pala period are distinguished by elegance of form, spiritual expression and superior workmanship.

The finest examples of Indian bronzes were made during the Chola period between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. They are at once solid, dignified, restrained and expressive of great power. The bearing is most naturalistic and the elements of decoration are

kept within proper limits. A most outstanding example is that of Siva Nataraja, illustrating the process of world-creation and dissolution in terms of a rhythmic dance. Encircled with a halo of flames, the deity sounds the small drum (*damaru*) with one hand and bears the consuming fire in the other. The two other hands are held in the pose of *abhaya* (protection) and *gajahasta* symbolizing energy (*kirya*). His right foot temples upon the demon of ignorance and the left swings in the air as a mark of deliverance. The figure of Rama as Kodandadhari, 'wielder of the bow', in the Madras Museum is a magnificent specimen of Indian bronze, tall in stature, dignified and gracefully posed with triumphant expression on the face

The South Indian bronzes are mostly portable specimens representing Brahmanical gods and goddeses. Siva, Vishnu and their wives Parvati and Sri Devi constitute typical specimens. The royal figures of the Chola period are also subjects of art. The Buddhist images from Negapatam (District Tanjore) are equally chaste and elegant specimens of bronze art. The images depicting Saiva saints are marked by intense spiritual expression; that of Sundaramurtisvami from Polannaruva in Ceylon is deservedly famous. The group showing king Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagara (1509-29) and his two queens is an extremely successful example of secular portraiture rendered with exquisite realism. The art of bronzes in South India continued to flourish up to the eighteenth century, although the age of glory ended with the Chola period. Bronze-casting was popular in Gujrat also, but the

available specimens belong to the category of domestic objects rather than of sculpture. Hanging temple-lamps were artistically adorned with dancing dolls in graceful poses. The specimens of the Gujrat Dipalakshmi sometimes exhibit grace and pleasant expression.

PAINTING

The antiquity of Indian painting is attested by continuous literary tradition from the time of epics and the Jatakas, which make reference to painted halls or chambers (*chitrasala*) in palaces. Kalidasa, of Gupta age, refers to master-painters as *chitracharya* and to painted halls as *chitrasala* or *chitrasadma*. While describing Parvati's first bloom of maidenhood the poet observes that she looked like a painting on which the final outline had been carefully drawn to mark the modelling of the different limbs of the body by the master-painter Kamadeva (*Kumarasambhava*, 1, 32). Both miniature painting on cloth and board and wall-paintings are referred to in classical Sanskrit literature and the pictorial motif of the hero or the heroine engaged in painting the portrait of the beloved or the lover is constantly employed in dramas to serve the ends of the plot. The Yaksha in the *Meghaduta* poem paints the portrait of his beloved in outline with red ochre on stone. Bhavabhuti, of the eighth century, in his *Uttararamacharita* refers to a gallery with the *Ramayana*-paintings executed on its walls. Banabhatta, in the seventh century, makes a significant reference that the wall-paintings in the city of Ujjain were crowded with the figures of gods and demons, Siddhas, Gandhar-

vas, Vidyadharas and Nagas, showing as it were the denizens of the whole universe entering into the composition of the pictures. Technical details about the preparation of surface for fresco-painting and of the different kinds of colours, together with the process of stippling and shading, are preserved in the *Chitrasutra*, a special section of the *Vishnudharmottara-purana* devoted to painting.

Early mural painting

The actual remains of Indian painting begin with the earliest specimens in Caves IX and X at Ajanta with figures resembling those at Bharhut and Sanchi and datable to about the second-first century B. C. The *Chhaddanta-Jataka* composition is a replica of the technique of Bharhut. The pillars of the chaitya-hall at Bedsa were originally painted and similarly the Jogimara cave in Sarguja State (Central Provinces) had painting of the comparable date showing figures, *makaras*, etc., drawn with vigour and decision, but obscured by a medieval palimpsest.

Later mural painting : Ajanta and Bagh

The next stage in the history of Indian painting comprises the painting of the Gupta period in the wall-paintings of the Ajanta caves, the Bagh caves in Gwalior State and the Sittannavasal caves in Pudukkottai State, ranging in date from the fifth to the seventh century. The subjects of the paintings relate to portraiture of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, narrative scenes from the Jatakas and decorative elements including figures of animals, flowers, trees, geometri-

cal patterns and scroll-work. Their variety, according to Griffiths, is infinite and is carried into smallest details so that repetition is very rare. Of the portraits the central figures are those of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Incidents in the life of Gautama Buddha are freely painted. The great Bodhisattva Padmapani Avalokitesvara in Cave I shows the highest attainment of Indian pictorial art in the way of figure-painting. The scene of the 'Dying Princess' in Cave XVI is thus praised by Griffiths : 'For pathos and sentiment and the unmistaken way of telling its story, this picture, I consider, cannot be surpassed in the history of art. The Florentine could have put better drawing and the Venetian better colour, but neither could have thrown greater expression into it'. The charming Mother-and-Child group in Cave XVII showing Yasodhara, the wife of Buddha, presenting Rahula, his son, to Buddha at her door is the most attractive specimen of Ajanta art. The paintings of Cave I and II are dated to about the early seventh century. A large picture in Cave I probably shows the Indian king Pulakesin II receiving an embassy from the Persian king Khusro Parvez (626-628). In the drinking groups in Cave I, the faces, the drapery and other articles show clear Persian influence. According to Rothenstein, 'On the hundred walls and pillars of these rock-carved temples a vast drama moves before our eyes, a drama played by princess and sages and heroes, by men and women of every condition, against marvellously varied scene, among forests and gardens, in courts and cities, on wide plain and in deep jungles; while above the messengers of heaven move swiftly

across the sky. From all these emanates a great joy in the surpassing radiance of the face of the world, in the physical nobility of men and women, in the strength and grace of animals and the loveliness and purity of men and flowers ; and woven into this fabric of material beauty we see the ordered pattern of the spiritual realities of the universe. It is this perfect combination of material and spiritual energy which marks the great periods of arts'. In the words of Lady Herringham we have the best general description of the paintings : 'The outline is in its final state, firm, but modulated and realistic, and not often like the calligraphic, sweeping curves of the Chinese and Japanese. The artists had a complete command of posture. Their knowledge of types and positions, gestures and beauties of hands is amazing. Many recial types are rendered , the features are often elaborately studied and of high breeding . . . . In some pictures considerable impetus of movement of different kinds is well suggested. Some of the schemes of the colour composition are most remarkable and interesting, and there is great variety '. It is impossible for him who has not seen the paintings with his own eyes to realise how wonderful in their simplicity and religious fervour the paintings are. For a time the visitor to the caves finds himself transported to a dreamland of beauty.

The paintings at Bagh represent only an extension of the Ajanta school and in variety of design and vigorous execution rank as high as those of Ajanta. The surviving scenes are of a secular nature. A

group illustrating the performance of *hallisaka* dance, showing a troupe of women led by a man, is extremely gay. The art of Ajanta and Bagh, informed as it is with a feeling of buoyant and pulsating life, captures in itself the best traditions of the art-renaissance at home and set up traditions which travelled to far-off countries. The frescoes at Bamiyan in Afghanistan of which the earliest specimens go back to the fifth or sixth century A.D. exhibit a strange medley of Indian, Iranian and Chinese influences. Similarly mural paintings of predominantly Indian type recalling Gupta and Pala models were found in the Buddhist monastery at Fondukistan, east of Bamiyan. Aurel Stein discovered Buddhist wall-paintings from a number of sites in Central Asia—Miran, Dandan Oiliq, Niya, etc.—in which Indian influences have mingled with those from China, Iran and the classical world. The art of Ajanta became the cosmopolitan art of the Buddhist world and seems to have gone with Buddhism wherever it went.

Medieval mural painting

Traces of Pallava painting in the Jaina cave of Sittannavasal and at Conjeeveram have been found. Well-paintings also occur in the Kailasa temple at Ellora in two layers, the lower one contemporaneous with the temple and the upper one added after about a century. The group of Vishnu and Lakshmi on Garuda stands stylistically midway between the later paintings of Ajanta and Chola period. Paintings of the Chola period have been recently discovered on the walls of the Brihadisvara temple at Tanjore executed probably in the beginning of the eleventh

century under Rajaraja the Great. South India preseves on her temple-walls an almost continuous tradition of mural paintings ; those of the Vijayanagara period occurring in the Lepakshi temple, Anantpur District, and in the Vishnu temple at Somapalle, Chittur District, of the sixteenth century, provide links with the early Rajasthani or Akbar style, in the forms of the eyes and the head-dresses.

The painting tradition in North India is to be traced in the paintings on the ceiling of the Madanpur temple in *Jhansi District* (twelfth century) which show in their angular features and projecting eyes affinities with the school of Western India. The palace-walls of Fatehpur Sikri and those in Kangra, Bundelkhand and Rajasthan exhibit paintings in the vigorous local style of their miniatures.

Miniature painting : the Pala school

The reaction of the large-scale paintings made itself manifest in the growth of miniature painting as evident in the Pala school of Bengal (tenth-twelfth centuries) and in the Western Indian school of Gujrat (eleventh-sixteenth centuries), both specializing in the art of illuminated manuscripts. The subject of the Pala miniature is Buddhist gods and goddesses and the art is characterized by sinuous lines, subdued tones and simple composition. The number of figures is very limited, generally about half a dozen. The art is best represented in the manuscripts of the famous Buddhist work the *Prajnaparamita,* the earliest specimens of which go back to the reign of the Pala king Mahendrapala (895) and Ramapaladeva (1093).

The Gujrat school

The Gujrat school of miniature painting, embodying a continuous history for five centuries (1100-1600), consists of illuminated Jaina manuscripts, the earlier ones on palm-leaf and the later ones on paper. The earlier miniatures show the use of brick-red background and the latter ones from the fifteenth century onwards the use of blue and gold on a lavish scale. The most notable features of these paintings are angular faces in three-fourths profile, pointed nose, eyes protruding beyond the facial line and an abundance of accessory details and ornamentation. The subject-matter is three-fold : (i) Jaina sacred texts (the *Kalpasutra* by far exceeds all others) in the early stage ; (ii) later on Vaishnava subjects like the *Gitagovinda, Bhagavata, Krishnalila* scenes and manuscripts of *Balagopalastuti* ; and (iii) secular paintings mainly dealing with the theme of love. Of the last the most notable example is the *Vasanta-vilasa* with seventynine miniatures on a roll af cloth (*kundalita chitrapata*) of great lyrical charm, illustrating the glory and hilarity of spring.

The Rajasthani school

The pictorial art of Rajputana (sixteenth-eighteenth centuries) shows the Indian genius in its pure inspiration and therefore has a more intimate appeal than its contemporary idiom of Mughal art. Combined with the art of the west Himalayas (seventeenth-eighteenth centuries), the Rajasthani art shows all that is best and of universal appeal in the emotional side of the

Indian people. In the words of Coomaraswamy, 'the work of the Rajput painters deserves to be given an honourable place amongst the great arts of the world'. Its inspiration is rooted in the people's hearts, keeping close to their poetry, music and drama. Its central theme is love. 'What Chinese art achieved for landscape is here accomplished for human love. Love is conceived as the means and symbol of all Union'. The lovers represented are always Radha and Krishna typifying the eternal motif of Man and Woman, and revealing in every day events the image of the events in heaven. 'The typical examples of Rajasthani painting have for us this lesson that what we cannot discover at home and in the familiar events, we cannot discover anywhere. The Holy Land is the land of our own experience—and if beauty is not apparent to us in the well-known, we shall not find it in things that are strange and far away'.

The women of these paintings are true to the ideals of feminine beauty—large lotus-eyes, flowing tresses, firm breasts, slender waists and rosy hands. The heart of a Hindu woman with all its devotional and emotional intensity is fully reflected in these paintings.

The artists make use of brilliant colours rendered with tempera effect and display an unusual understanding of the secret of colour harmony. The themes of Rajasthani miniatures are as varied as the medieval literature of Hindu India, in which the sentiments of love and devotion are mingled with an exuberant joy of life. An entire world of folk-lore stands documented in the paintings of Rajputana and the sub-Hima-

layan regions. Their common subject-matter appertains to the cycle of Krishna legends ; to *sringara* or sentiment of love expressing itself in the erotic motifs of 'Heroes and Heroines' ; union of Siva and Parvati; scenes from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*; ballads and romantic poems like the *Hammira-hatha* and *Nala-Damayanti*, seasons (*Baramasa*), portraiture and the *Ragamalas*.

The Ragamalas ('Garlands of Musical Modes') as expressed in painting provide a group of subjects giving unlimited opportunities for artistic treatment. They are derived from the inexhaustible fountain of Hindu religious and lyrical imagination. The best examples belong to the seventeenth century and are characterized by singular tenderness and lyrical grace giving them a title to be reckoned amongst the best pictorial works ever produced in India.

The idea of associating music with painting, although unique to Indian art, should not be made the subject of needless mystery. Each *raga* and *ragini* (musical tune) has for its burden an emotional situation based on some phase of love, either in union or in separation. The picture of a *raga* is a visual representation of emotional state of mind treating the material world and nature as mirrors of the same mood. The names of the *ragas* are partly derived from the geographical distribution of the different tunes which were selected for the expression of particular sentiments. For example, the Todi *ragini* takes its name from South India (ancient Tondi). Its pictorial representation usually consists of a charming woman playing the

vina, the characteristic South Indian instrument, and attracting bright-coloured deer. The imagery is quite transparent, corresponding to that of a maiden whose blossoming youth has just begun to inspire the strains of love, and listening to whose melody the herd of deer, symbolizing young lovers, gets bewildered and flocks round her. Similarly we can understand the emotional conception of other *ragas, e.g*, Khambavati worshipping Brahma illustrates an old idea making the Creator fall in love with the charming beauty of his own creation, Bilavala corresponding to the type of a heroine in whom pangs of love are awakened by a vision of her own beauty in a mirror; or Malkaus typifying lovers in dalliance ; or Desakh corresponding to a heroine with extreme passionate intensity rubbing her body against a post, symbolizing the hero ; or the most favourite of the *raginis*, the Bhairvi, representing the young heroine, who, delighted, like Parvati, by the vision of a union with her lover, gets absorbed in worshipping him.

The different *ragas* were appropriated to different seasons connecting certain strains with certain ideas. According to the exposition of William Jones, 'the artists were able to recall the memory of autumnal merriment at the close of the harvest ; of reviving hilarity on the revival of blossoms and complete vernal delight in the month of Vasanta ; of languor during the dry heats and refreshment by the first rains which cause in the Indian climate a second spring. The inventive talents of the Greeks never suggested a more charming allegory than the lovely families of the

six *ragas* named in the order of seasons—Bhairava, Malava, Sri-Raga, Hindola or Vasanta, Dipaka and Megha ; each of whom is wedded to five *raginis* or nymphs—presenting wonderfully diversified images for the play of the artist's genius.

The Pahari school

The same inspiration and subject-matter gave birth to the paintings of the west Himalayan schools, popularly known as Pahari, and produced in the bee-hive of the sub-Himalyan states of Jammu, Basohli, Chamba, Nurpur, Kangra, Kullu, Mandi, Suket, etc. Tehri-Garhwal, the southernmost centre of this group, shows in its paintings a family resemblance to Kangra where some excellent finished work was produced in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The eternal theme of the Himalayan art is the figure of Krishna both in his boyhood pranks and his love-episodes with Radha. Dance and music in sylvan surroundings form a recurrent motif of this school. The paintings produced at Basohli show unusual brilliance of colour and animated expression. Their vigorous quality, spacious composition and brilliant colours entitle these pictures to a very high place amongst the Pahari masterpieces. The paintings of Kangra proper exhibit fine workmanship as in Mughal miniatures. Their tones are subdued and the line is exquisitely fine, rhythmic and racy, specially in the delicate rendering of female figures.

The Mughul school

The Mughuls in India were enlightened patrons of art, under whom architecture, painting, textiles and

carving burst into a new afflorescence. As a boy Akbar had himself taken lessons in drawing, and to his personal interest and patronage of painting is due the great impulse that this art received during his reign. He invited hundreds of painters from all over India including Gujarat-Rajputana and entrusted them with the work of producing illustrated masterpieces of Sanskrit and Persian literatures. Amongst these was the history of the house of Timur, now preserved in original at Patna, the *Mahabharata* of which Akbar's own copy under the name of *Razmnama* with 169 pictures is preserved at Jaipur, the *Hamzanama*, a book of romantic tales for which the emperor had great fondness and of which 1375 paintings were executed on cloth (only about a hundred are now preserved, of which four are in India), the *Ramayana*, the *Akbarnama* (life of Akbar by Abu'l Fazl), the *Iyar-i-Danish* and others, each of which a number of painters combined to illustrate. It was an eclectic school that Akbar built up, taking the best elements of the Rajasthani and the Persian schools and imparting to it a genuine Indian feeling. As the Mughuls gradually became rooted in the soil, so also did the pictorial art fostered by them, develop its essentially Indian character and the Mughul school soon spread throughout the country. It was an art primarily of book-illustration and individual portraiture including varied scenes of court and palace-life depicting the emperors, their family and nobles. Whereas in the Gujarati and Rajasthani schools the same idealized type of human face was nearly repeated again and again like the types in sculpture, the facial type in Mughul art was meant to

represent with all the mastery of line and colour real persons endowed with character and individuality.

Jahangir, a generous patron of painting and artists, used to pride himself on the critical powers of appreciation. 'I am very fond of pictures and have such discrimination in judging them that I can tell the name of the artist. If there are similar portraits finished by several artists, I could point out the painter of each'. The beauty of line and the delicacy of soft colours melting into one another mark the beautiful paintings executed in his reign, which are mostly concerned with the episodes of his own life. He was extremely fond of animal and bird drawings of which many masterpieces by Ustad Mansur have been preserved.

The name of Shah Jahan is associated with tremendous building-activity. The art of painting did not receive the same attention as architecture, but the painters spared no pains in the careful treatment of lines, selection of colours and highly-finished decorative details, although the pictures are marked by a certain amount of stiffness. Individual portraits, *darbar*-scenes and paintings of *darveshes* are numerous. In the time of Aurangzeb painting received a setback as imperial patronage was withdrawn and painters were obliged to fall back upon the precarious patronage of local courts. The subject-matter of later Mughul paintings was now confined mainly to harem-scenes with kings and grandees indulging in drink and music in the company of women. The *Ragamala* subjects also were adopted by the painters of the Delhi school but with poor results.

The art of the Mughuls was aristocratic, distinguished by realism, careful and refined draughtsmanship, and a high intellectual quality. In addition to their historical value, its finest products are aesthetic gems which have elicited the appreciation of discriminating art-critics.

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4. Greater India

India's position on the cultural map of Asia is like the hub of a wheel with spokes radiating towards Iran and Afghanistan on the west; Central Asia, Tibet and China on the north; Burma, Siam, Indo-China and Indonesia on the east and Ceylon on the south. The history and prehistory of India is closely linked with that of these peripheral countries; from them India has constantly derived stimulus and reinforcement; to them she has given ideas and peoples which are an integral part of their inheritance. Formidable barriers of mountain and ocean have failed to obstruct a close and significant cultural and commercial interchange. The great Himalayan massif and its extensions, which on the map make India look geographically exclusive, are in fact penetrated at a large number of points; there are routes from the Brahmaputra in Assam to China, through Sikkim to Tibet, and from Kashmir to Turkistan; the last routes, especially arduous as they are, were followed by a number of Chinese pilgrims visiting India for reilgious homage or study. Anciently, the importance of these routes lay not so much in the formation of Indian civilization as in the reverse direction, as channels for the diffusion of Buddhism and Buddhist art from India to Central Asia and to China. The approaches on the north-western frontier, which loom large in Indian history, may be grouped into two series, northern and southern. The northern group links

North Iran and the Oxus region with Kabul and the central reaches of the Indus : the southern group links South Iran alternatively with Kandahar, North Baluchistan and the most southerly reaches of the Indus, or with Makran and the Indus delta. These land-approaches were supplemented by trans-oceanic routes emanating from important sea-ports on India's extensive coast-line and connecting her with the Graeco-Roman and the Muslim worlds towards the west and the Indian Archipelago and China towards the east. This communication with the outside world was reinforced in India itself by well-developed arterial routes traversing the great plains and penetrating the river-valleys. The great Northern Route (*Uttara-patha*) extended from Tamralipti on the eastern sea-coast up to the Oxus region, linking famous trade-centres and capitals such as Champa, Pataliputra, Kasi, Kausambi, Mathura, Sakala (Sialkot), Takshasila (Taxila), Purushapura (Peshawar), Nagara-hara (Jalalabad), Kapisa (Begram) and Balhika (Balkh), where it picked up the Silk-routes from Central Asia and China to the west. Another important route traversed the Central Indian plateau linking by its two arms Kausambi and Mathura with Ujjayani and the sea-port of Bharukachha or Barygaza on the west coast. On the Indian side a large number of trading sea-ports and emporia specially on the eastern sea-coast in Orissa and Madras served as clearing-house for the cargo brought in vessels from the Roman world in the early centuries of the Christian era and from the Malayan Peninsula, Indonesia and China in the medieval period. The find of Roman coins and

pottery, and Chinese celadon ware in various parts of India are archaeological proof of these relationships.

India and Iraq

The urban civilization flourishing in the Indus valley in the third millennium B.C. in the cities of Mohenjo-daro in Sind and Harappa in the Punjab had contacts with the contemporary cities of Iraq. At Ur and its sister-cities objects, made by craftsmen of the Indus valley, have been found from time to time ; and on the other hand typically foreign objects found on the Harappa sites bear witness to intercourse between the Indus valley and Mesopotamia and perhaps Asia minor, e. g. spiral-headed hair-pins, cylindrical seals with horned deities, etched carnelian beads, fragmentary vessels of steatite with mat-pattern, spiral needles, stone jewel-boxes with compartments inside, heart-shaped pieces of bone-inlay and knobbed pottery.

India and Iran

Both in the prehistoric and the historical periods Iran had the closest relations with India. The plains of the Euphrates and the Indus, flanking on two sides the Iranian plateau, both seem to have received a stimulus from Iran in the making of their earliest civilizations, although the exact nature of that stimulus is not yet fully revealed. A powerful branch of the Aryans, from whatever original home they came, settled in Iran about the beginning of the second millennium B.C. Another important branch settled in India, although their earliest history, so far as monuments of material culture are concerned, remains still

unexplored in both countries. India and Iran testify to these early cultural ties in the matter of language, for the modern Persian language is as much derived from the ancient speech of the Aryans through the intermediary stages of the old Iranian and the Pehlvi as are certain of the modern Indian languages descended from the parent Vedic speech. The ancient Avestic literature of the Parsis together with the voluminous commentaries and translations into Pehlvi during the Sassanian times (third-seventh centuries) are important for the light they throw on the early religious and linguistic history of India and Iran. The religion of Zoroaster found a haven on the soil of India when the first colony of Parsi immigrants was established at Sanjan in District Thana, Bombay, in 735. This was preceded by a long tradition of Indo-Iranian relationship which reached its zenith during Gupta-Sassanian times. The whole currency of India during the seventh-twelfth centuries betrays strong Sassanian influence both in weight and design. In the seventh century an embassy was exchanged between Khusru II of Persia and an Indian king, presumably the Chalukyan king Pulakesin of the Deccan (*c.* 625), of which mention is made by the Arab historian Tabari, and a court-scene in Cave I at Ajanta appears to represent the reception of a Persian embassy at the court of an Indian king. The paintings in Cave I are imbued with strong Sassanian influence. During the period of the Caliphs Indian literature, specially on medicine and astronomy, was in great demand and translated into Arabic. India's great story-book, the ***Panchatantra,*** was accorded a warm reception at the court of the

Caliphs and became popular throughout the Muslim world in its Arabic and Persian translations, which subsequently became the medium of its introduction into the languages of Europe. During the Muslim period both India and Iran extensively exchanged with each other their art, religion, language and culture.

India and Afghanistan

Afghanistan lies athwart the main north-western gateways of India. It has from the earliest times shared freely the cultural movements emanating to and from Indian soil. Its ancient geographical names are surviving monuments of ancient Aryan settlements; for example, Sarasvati is preserved in the modern name Arghandab through Avestic *Harahvaiti*, later *Arkhvati* ; Sarayu in Avestic *Harayu* modern Hari Ruda ; Balhika in Balkh ; Gandhara (although the old name of the region from Kabul to Rawalpindi) in Kandahar; Suvastu in Swat ; and the river-names Kubha in Kabul and Gomati in Gomal. The Rigvedic name Pakthana is the origin of Pakhtoon and Pathan, and Asvakayana (mentioned by the Greeks as Assakenoi) of Afghan. Similarly Hastinayana (mentioned by the grammarian Panini) corresponds to Greek Astake(ne)noi with capital at Pushkalavati (modern Charsada) and Asvayana to Aspasioi. The Afridis and the Mohamands, the famous Pakhtoon tribes, were known in the *Mahabharata* and to Panini as Aprita and Madhumanta. In the river-valleys of Afghanistan were settled numerous Aryan tribes enjoying their independent existence and most of them even under changed religious conditions have preserved their linguistic pecu-

liarities. The Pashto language is a dialect of Sanskrit both in its vocabulary and in its grammatical structure.

In the early historic period after Alexander's invasion, Afghanistan formed part of the empire of Chandragupta Maurya and his grandson Asoka. During the Indo-Greek and the Kushana periods Afghanistan's polity was linked with that of India, and a flourishing school of art known as Graeco-Buddhist or Gandhara art flourished in the north-west of India, produced by the combination of foreign and native elements with the main features of Indian art. This art survives in the numerous monumental stupas and sculptures in stone (first-third century) and in figures of clay and stucco (third-fifth century). The latter represent some of the finest products of Buddhist art. At Hadda, near Jalalabad, and as far away as Kunduz on the Oxus plain, stucco figures of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and their worshippers are found in form and style identical with those from Taxila in the northern Punjab. At Kapisa, represented by modern Begram, 50 miles north of Kabul, has been discovered the greatest known collection of Indian ivory-carvings, which are primarily inspired by the best traditions of the Mathura school and which at once put the work of the ivory-carvers of the Mathura region into the front rank of ancient craftsmanship. At Bamiyan in the Kabul valley, fresco-paintings of the Gupta period executed in the Ajanta technique have been discovered; colossal statues of the Buddha, one as much as 159 feet high, carved in solid rock greeted devout pilgrims from Central Asia and China at the entrance to the Holy

Land of Buddhism. On the disruption of the Kushana empire local dynasties continued to rule for a long time in the north-west and the Shahi kings of Kabul kept up the cultural and religious link with the mother-country until the end of the tenth century. Thereafter Indo-Afghan relationship assumed a new aspect; but though under a succession of Muslim dynasties Afghanistan largely lost its political entity, many old cultural elements have been preserved in the folklore and folk-songs of the country and well deserve a more extensive research than they have yet received.

India and Central Asia

Chinese Turkistan or the 'innermost heart of Asia,' as it has been called, was the meeting-ground of different races, arts and languages—Chinese from the east, Graeco-Bactrian and Iranian from the west, and Indian from the south. Cultural influences travelled along two channels, a northern route passing through Kucha, Kara Shahr (Agnidesa) and Turfan, and a southern route passing through Yarkand, Khotan, Niya, Miran, etc., the two routes meeting at Tun Huang on the western borders of China. Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim of the seventh century, had selected the northern route for coming to India and the southern route for the return-journey, the cities along the routes serving as stages in the pilgrim's progress both from and to China. In the once flourishing monasteries and houses of the cities have been found an exceptional wealth of archaeological material consisting of specimeans of Buddhist art and manuscripts in Brahmi and other scripts, and in several languages such as Sanskrit,

Chinese, Syrian Soghdian, Turkish, Tokharian and Khotanese. India played a dominant role in this remarkable cultural diffusion, mainly through the influence of Buddhism. Kharoshthi wooden documents found at Niya show that Prakrit was the official language over the wide area from Khotan to the western extremity of the Lob-nor region in south-eastern Turkistan up to the beginning of the fourth century. A fragmentary manuscript of the dramas of Asvaghosha (c. second century) and the Bower manuscripts comprising several Indian medical texts (fourth-fifth century) are important finds from Central Asia which show the extent of Indian influence.

India and China

China is referred to in the *Mahabharata* as China, the Sanskrit adaptation of Tsin, the name of an ancient dynasty. The Chinese legends speak of the first appearance of Indian Buddhist missionaries in China in 217 B. C., but Buddhism was first introduced to the Chinese court by Kasyapa Matanga who arrived at the imperial capital in A. D. 65 with a precious cargo of sacred texts and relics at the invitation of the emperor Ming-Ti of the Han dynasty. Soon a stream of Indian scholars and learned Chinese pilgrims began to flow between the two countries in search of sacred texts and knowledge. Boards for translation were appointed in China under the imperial direction and a vast body of Sanskrit literature was translated into Chinese; of this more than sixteen hundred texts, of which the Indian originals are lost, are Tripitaka. In 546 Paramartha, an Indian Buddhist scholar, at the

invitation of the Chinese emperor Wu-Ti, reached Canton with a large collection of manuscripts which he presented to the emperor. He devoted the rest of his life to translating them until his death in 569.

India's intercourse with China reached its peak in the reign of Harsha (606-648) when formal embassies were exchanged. Hiuen Tsang, the most brilliant representative of this Sino-Indian cultural relationship, visited India during the years 629-645, in the time of Harsha, spent several years at Nalanda studying Sanskrit and returned to China with a cargo of religious texts, which he himself translated into Chinese. The inflow of Chinese pilgrims to India increased considerably during the Sung period of China (960-1279), and is referred to incidently in five records found engraved at Bodhgaya.

The Indian contribution to Chinese culture was mainly through its religious ideals and its art. A considerable amount of Buddhist statuary in the Tien-Lung Shan caves in Shansi province is derived from the Buddha and Bodhisattva images based on the Indian works of the Mathura school of the fifth and sixth centuries. The formal treatment and the general modelling of the types so closely resemble those of certain Gupta sculptures that one may be justified in supposing that a direct influence from India had reached the artists. The reliefs in the Nan-Hsing-T'ang cave-temples in Honan representing Buddha figures and the Buddhist paradises reveal South Indian features, similar to the carvings of Nagarjunikonda and Amaravati. One of the greatest religious factors in transforming Chinese life and thought was the emer-

gence of the Dhyana school of Buddhism, which laid emphasis on *yoga* and spiritual practices and had much in common with the esoteric form of Mahayana Buddhism evolving on the Indian soil. Several important hoards of Chinese coins as well as specimens of glazed porcelain ware found in many places in India[1] indicate the continuity of commercial relationship up to about the thirteenth century.

India and Tibet

Tibet, known in early Indian geography through the holy Kailasa and Mansarovara, came under the complete influence of Buddhism during the time of Srong-Tsan-Gampo, the most distinguished ruler of Tibet, who founded Lhasa in 639. With the help of Indian scholars, he gave to Tibet a script based on the seventh century script of India. A vast body of Indian literature consisting of religious texts and secular works, translated into the Tibetan language, is preserved in the two collections known as *Tanjur* and *Kanjur* Tibetan art consists mostly of Buddhist paintings on silk, fresco-paintings on walls and bronze images. The silk paintings or *Thankas* (temple-banners) fall into two groups. The first, connected with the ministry of the great scholar Atisa, who went to Tibet in the eleventh century, shows scenes from the life of Buddha, is devoid of Tantric elements and appears to be based on Indian traditions taken from Nepal and Bengal. The second group is of later origin showing a much more complex pantheon of Buddha, and Bodhisattvas, Lokapalas, saints and heroes. Tibetan bronze

[1]*Ancient India*, No. 2 (1946), pp. 91ff.

figures, dipicting mostly the same subjects as the paintings, belong to the second group from the seventeenth century onwards. In the thirteenth century Kublai Khan, the great Mongolian emperor, adopted the Tibetan script as the official script of his empire. He sent for a scholar from Tibet name Matidhaja, who devised the new script based on the Indian form of writing.

India and Nepal

The Nepalese language, script, religion and art have all been deeply influenced by India. Buddha's birthplace, Lumbini, marked by an Asokan pillar, lies within the borders of Nepal. Asoka is credited with the building of stupas at Patan and the introduction of Buddhism into Nepal. During the middle ages Buddhism and Brahmanism combined in the form of a Tantric religion, which took hold in Nepal. After the dispersal of the Buddhist centres in Bihar and Bengal in the early twelfth century by the Muslim invaders, Nepal gave shelter to monks who took with them valuable manuscripts and images. A large number of Mahayana Sanskrit texts, of which the Indian originals do not now exist, have thus been preserved in Nepal. Nepalese images in gilt copper and brass showing Buddhist Tantric deities as well as images of Hindu gods like Vishnu, Siva and Krishna are well-known and are often of fine workmanship. Nepalese painting is represented by *Thankas* on cloth and scrolls on paper of the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries.

India and Ceylon

Ceylon owes to India its Buddhist faith, the Pali

language and much of its artistic inspiration. On the other hand, India's debt to Ceylon is also deep, as the latter has preserved the original Pali Buddhist canon amplified by commentaries, which had long ago disappeared from the Indian mainland. In Asoka's scheme of missionary activity Ceylon occupied an important place; the emperor sent his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra to the island where they were received by King Devanampiya Tissa, who founded in their honour the Mahavihara ('the great monastery'), the headquarters of Ceylonese Buddhism. An offshoot of the Bodhi-tree at Bodh-gaya under which Buddha attaind his Buddha-hood, was planted in the monastery and survives to the present day under the name of Jaya-Mahabodhi. As a result of this mission Ceylon witnessed a spiritual and intellectual transformation in its insular life. Later also Samudragupta (*c.* 330-375) refers to his friendly contact with the king of Ceylon. The latter requested permission through an emassy to build a monastery at Bodhgaya for the use of Ceylonese pilgrims, and when Hiuen Tsang visted the place in the seventh century, this magnificent establishment contained a thousand monks. Mahanaman, a Ceylonese monk, has left an inscription at Bodhgaya, dated 588-89, recording the building of a shrine at the place of Buddha's enlightenment. The best fruit of Indo-Ceylonese cultural relationship is symbolized in Buddhaghosha who arrived in Ceylon from Bodhgaya in the reign of King Mahanaman (412-34) and enriched the Pali canon by writing voluminous commentaries, now famous throughout the Buddhist world.

Anuradhapura, the ancient capital, and Polannaruva (old Pulastyapura) are the two great centres of Ceylonese art. At Anuradhapura, the principle monuments include the great stupa (Mahathupa) built about 100 B.C. with a dome 270 feet high ; the Jetavanarama or Eastern Dagaba built in the fourth century in the time of Meghavarna, a contemporary of Samudragupta; and Abhayagiri or Northern Dagaba. These gigantic stupas were derived from early Indian prototypes with the difference that they are without railings and gateways. A series of Hindu temples built in the Chola style when the Cholas of South India occupied the island (tenth-eleventh century), exists at Polannaruva. Bronze images of Hindu gods and goddesses in South Indian style, evidently made by Indian artists, have also been found. The fresco-paintings in the palace of King Kasyapa at Sigiriya are in typical Ajanta style.

India and Burma

Burma owes to India her religion, philosophy, canonical literature, sacred language and script. It was known in the *Ramayana* as the land of silver-mines. In the international embassy-scheme of Asoka, Burma received two religious leaders, Sona and Uttara, who are credited with introducing Buddhism to that country. By about the first century, Indian colonies had been established at Hastinapur (modern Tagaung in North Burma), Srikshetra (Prome), Vishnupura (Pisanu Myo, 'city of Tishnu') near Prome in Central Burma and Sudhammavati (modern Thaton) on the sea-coast in South Burma, which was the capital of the Ramanya

country. Both the land-route through Bengal and Assam and the sea-route from the port of Tamralipti were used in this cultural expansion. In the Gupta period a number of Buddhist stupas and images as well as Hindu temples with sculptures of Siva and Vishnu inspired by Gupta traditions were executed; they are now exposed in the old remains of Prome and Thaton. The latter place, a centre of Hinayana Buddhism, is said to have been visited in about 450 by Buddhaghosha who brought with him a copy of the Pali Tripitaka as a national gift to Burma.

The golden age of Burmese history coincides with the reign of Anirudha (Burmese Anawrata, 1040-1077) who made Arimardanapura (modern Pagan) on the Iravadi his capital and established here a library for housing the Tripitaka literature. His romantic relations with India are shown by his having sent a matrimonial mission which came as far as Vaisali in Bihar and obtained for their sovereign a beautiful princess named Panchakalyani. She became the mother of Kynzittha, the most powerful emperor of Burma (1084-1112). whose coronation in the orthodox Indian style with Vedic hymns was celebrated at Pagan. During their reigns Pagan became the principal temple-city of Burma and the biggest centre of art in Asia. Of the five thousand pagodas in Pagan, the richest is the Ananda temple, which was planned by Kynzittha on the model of an Indian temple and executed by Hindu architects. It contains eighty-one stone reliefs of the Buddha and fifteen hundred glazed terracotta panels with Jataka scenes. The temples are

mostly of brick with stucco-decoration. The fresco-paintings in these temples are in the style of the Pala paintings of India. Kynzittha restored the Bodh-gaya temple through a special mission. From the thirteenth century, the cultural links between India and Burma declined owing to foreign invasions, but the people tenaciously preserved their religion, art and culture. In 1859, Emperor Mindon Min built the wonderful palaces of Mandalay and ordered countless Buddhist scriptures to be written and beautifully illustrated for presentation to the monasteries.

India and South-east Asia

India's neighbours towards her south-eastern frontiers include Malaya, Sumatra, Java, Bali, Cambodia and Siam. Strong cultural influences from India transported mainly through maritime routes made this vast region almost a cultural province of India. The intercourse between India and the Far East depended on deep sea-voyages undertaken with great daring and adventure from sea-ports on the Bengal and Madras coast-line, of which Tamralipti, Paloura near Ganjam at the mouth of the Godavari and Puhar or Kaveripattanam on the mouth of the Kaveri were great centres of trade and commercial enterprise. The history of the Indian contacts goes back to about the beginning of the Christian era, Yavadvip (Java) with its seven subsidiary kingdoms having been mentioned in the *Ramayana*. A Sanskrit inscription from Vo-Chanh in Annam of about the third century furnishes the earliest archaeological proof of these contacts. By the fourth century Hindu kingdoms had been established in Indo-

China using Sanskrit as the official language. The sculpture and architecture of the period, fifth to eighth centuries, are closely related to Indian types and greatly influenced by the Gupta style. The period from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries is marked by an outburst of local national culture which had by that time fully assimilated the literary and atristic traditions from India.

Siam—The Thais came to occupy the Menam delta in the thirteenth century. Prior to that, Siam under the name of Dvaravati, formed part of the ancient empire of Kambuja or Combodia. The style of Dvaravati art found mainly at Navapura (modern Labapuri) is markedly Indian, closely related to Gupta art. Standing and seated figures of the Buddha both in stone and bronze as well as images of Vishnu have been found. In the thirteenth century Siam, under its great king Rama Khamhang (1296), became independent of Cambodia under the name of Svargaloka-sukhodaya. His grandson Hridayaraja founded Ayodhya (Ayuthia) in about 1350, which continued to be the capital until it was superseded by Bangkok in 1767. Siamese sculptures of the eleventh-twelfth centuries are Buddhist and show Khmer influence, through Burma but the finest examples of Siamese art came with the rise of the Sukhodaya kindom, showing marked Simhalese inspiration. The Pali literature has exercised great influence on the growth of Siamese literature.

Cambodia- Cambodia (Kambuja) and Annam (Champa) were the first to receive colonists from India. Local

tradition speaks of an Indian Brahmin Kaundinya as having landed in Funan, i. e., Kambuja, from a merchant-vessel and to have become the ruler of the land after marrying Soma, a local princess. By 400 Kambuja was centrally governed by a Hindu king named Srutavarman.

The art of Funan falls into two distinct periods, the earlier one, pre-Khmer, of the fifth to seventh centuries, strongly influenced by India; and the later one, classic Khmer of the ninth to twelfth centuries. Inscriptions found here in the Pallava script of South India are in the Sanskrit language and reveal a complete background of Vedic and Puranic literature. The style of early temples is like that of the Deogarh temple of North India, consisting of a square cell with a flat roof. The group of about fifty brick temples with sculptured slabs on the walls, found at Praikuk, Kompong and Thom shows strong Indian features and adds to our knowledge of Gupta art.

With the rise of the classic-Khmer period in the ninth century new flood-gates of cultural activity were thrown open on to the land of Kambuja. For nearly five centuries the cult and mythology remained essentially Indian, comprising almost the entire Brahmanical and Buddhist pantheon. A great monument of this age is the temple of Angkor Wat (old Yasodharapura) in central Cambodia built by King Suryavarman II (c. 1125). It is a beautiful and impressive Brahmanical temple, in which the gallery-reliefs consisting of dancing nymphs, battle-scenes from the epics, Puranic legends and scenes of heaven and hell are

more animated than even in the sculptures of Borobudur. The temple of Angkor Thom built by Yasovarman (c. 900) enshrines Hindu gods such as Siva and Vishnu as well as Buddhist gods of the Mahayana cult.

Champa.—Champa, corresponding to modern Annam on the eastern coast of French Indo-China, was the earliest to be colonized from India at an early date and continued to be a land of mixed Indo-Cham culture for a thousand years (c. third-thirteenth centuries) About the second or third century there flourished in central Champa the Hindu kingdom of Kanthara, of which the Sanskrit inscription from Vo-Chanh is a valuable record. Some time later it was succeeded by the kingdom of Panduranga (modern Phanrang) on the sea-coast. In 380 Dharmaraja Sri Bhadravarman ascended the throne and ruled over an extensive empire which included Amaravati, Panduranga and Vijaya. He built a temple of Siva at Mison which later became a national centre of pilgrimage. His son Gangaraja, as recorded in one of his inscriptions, came to India to spend his last days on the banks of the Ganges in the orthodox Hindu way. His dynasty ended in 757. During this period Champa was virtually a central province of India in respect of art, Sanskrit language and Brahmanical religion. The Sanskrit inscriptions of Champa provide excellent specimens of classical Sanskrit poetry. Saivism was the predominant religion, Siva being described in one inscription as the highest god of the country. Dong-Duong is the only Buddhist site in Champa and its sculpture is closely related in style to the Indian school of Amaravti.

Indonesia.—The principal Indonesian islands, Java, Sumatra and Bali, furnish profuse evidence, both architectural and literary, of strong cultural influence from India. Possibly the earliest Indian settlement was in western Java dating to the beginning of the Christian era. Sanskrit inscriptions in the Pallava script of the fourth-fifth century refer to the old Hindu capital of Taruma and its king Purnavarman, but of this phase few traces have been left.

The next phase opens with the eighth century in middle Java with the rule of the mighty Sailendra kings (732-807) and is marked by numerous monuments, of which the earliest Buddhist temple, Chandi Kalasan, dated 778 and dedicated to the goddess Tara, contains beautiful decorative sculpture. The Sailendras were the rulers of Srivijaya in central Sumatra, a mighty kingdom comprising Java, Sumatra and the Malayan Peninsula. They were zealous Buddhists commanding great political power and entered into contact with kings in India and the neighbouring lands in China. A copper-plate inscription found in the excavations of Nalanda in Bihar shows that a Sailendra king endowed a monastery at Nalanda for the residence of monks.

The greatest surviving monument of the Buddhist religion, the stupa of Borobudur, is in Java and was built probably in the latter half of the eighth century. The monument is very elaborate in its construction and ornamentation. The body of the building consists of a succession of nine terraces, of which the six lower ones are square and the three upper ones circular. The

gateways and the paths of circumambulation are adorned with sculptured slabs which are unsurpassed in the East for their profusion and beauty. The number of panels is about fifteen hundred and, if placed side by side, would extend to three miles in length. They show great ability in the rendering of the human figures, animals in lively poses, as well as forest-scenes. The life-story of the Buddha according to the famous Sanskrit text, the *Lalita-vistara*, together with a number of Buddhist legends from the *Divyavadana*, the *Jatakamala*, etc., are illustrated on the panels. The sculpture as a whole represents the popular inspiration behind the Mahayana phase of Buddhism as evolved during the Gupta period.

An important group of monuments of the Hindu period (ninth century) is found near Prambanam in the east of Jogjakarta consisting of three lofty temples, dedicated to the three great gods of Hinduism—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. The panels of the Siva temple illustrating the *Ramayana* are in the same style as Borobudur but are even more animated. After 919 the centre of art shifted to East Java where the Indonesian genius asserted itself with greater independence, although the subjects continued to be mostly Brahmanical and sometimes Buddhist. The reliefs of the Jago temple near the town of Mallam illustrate the Krishna story, a theme unexpected in a Buddhist temple. As a matter of fact the profuse intermixture of Buddhist and Brahmanical cults took place in Java during the eleventh-twelfth centuries—a phenomenon not unknown in India—and its effects still survive in the culture of Bali. The medieval Indian Sanskrit

story-literature refers to frequent sea-voyages by rich merchants and daring sea men, who sailed from Indian ports on commercial missions to Yava-dvipa (Java), Kataha-dvipa (Kadaram or Keda in Malaya Peninsula), Malaya-dvipa and Suvarna-dvipa (Sumatra).

Thus with most of the countries of Greater India lying towards the east and the north, India forged links between the first and the tenth centuries. The great mass of archaeological and literary evidence extending from the ruins of the ' innermost heart of Central Asia ' to the islands of the Eastern Archipelago and Indo-China presents an impressive picture of the achievement of ancient India alike in the field of commerce and of culture.